

September 30, 2012

David White
Department of Planning & Zoning
149 Church Street
Burlington, VT 05401

Dear David,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the 7/12/12 draft of PlanBTV. Overall, Local Motion is very pleased with this draft of the document and the incorporation of many of our previous suggestions. The extensive public involvement and the creative thinking that has gone into this plan should give our community a good rudder for many years to come.

Page 50: Support strong housing development downtown

We were pleased to see throughout the document strong language for removing barriers to increased housing development of all types in the downtown core. We were also pleased to see the PlanBTV transportation study demonstrated that downtown housing can actually lessen vehicle congestion downtown. More housing downtown will lead to more practical shops in the downtown and more people able to walk, bike and take the bus to do their errands.

Page 52: Support limiting parking requirements, incentivizing transportation options

We appreciate that the plan specifically calls for updating the inclusionary zoning laws and significant adjusting the 50% residential limit on downtown developments. Additionally, we like the recommendation to "Eliminate off-street parking requirements for downtown and waterfront development". We appreciate this language but recommending additional language that talks about incentivizing or requiring developers to improve transportation options for their future tenants whether through including carsharing, secure covered bike parking, covered waiting areas for waiting carpoolers, transit riders and pedestrians.

Page 53: Fix Typo

Change "Maglianero's Café" to Maglianero Café.

Page 62: Clarify transit section and highlight CCTA's Transit Plan

The sentence "Regular and frequent transit service connecting the two makes living, working or visiting Burlington carfree a breeze" is confusing. Is this implying connecting the future Amtrak station with the Airport? Such a connection isn't a transit priority for the region – there are many other priorities. Referencing CCTA's forward thinking Transit Development Plan in PlanBTV would make sense.

Page 63: Revise section on green belts

Local Motion does not agree with “With very few exceptions, space devoted to “green belt” (ok, so it’s really a “brown belt”) should be reclaimed as sidewalk as part of a “Green Street”. With greater attention to the greenbelts through more BID involvement, more intentional plantings, railings as needed and other amenities, our greenbelts can thrive. They provide a good visual and special buffer between the sidewalk and the street. We do acknowledge that there are places where the greenbelts should be removed and sidewalks should be extended, but it should be done by reviewing the characteristics of individual streets.

Page 63: Call for consistent, clear pedestrian policy in downtown

We appreciate the section Crossing to the Other Side, and would suggest text that calls for a downtown intensive pedestrian zone – a place where design elements such as a button-free automatic leading pedestrian phases are standard. Currently we have a myriad of pedestrian facilities in downtown. A clearer standard of pedestrian accommodations will help tie together the downtown pedestrian experience.

Page 64: Broaden view of where ‘Functional Bike Parking’ can be located

Revise the text to include the underlined section -- “Racks should continue to be placed around the city, both outside as well as inside – incorporated into downtown developments and parking garages.” Indoor secure parking is a big enticement for bicycle commuters.

Page 64: Merge Actions #1 and #3 as they are similar

Some of the language about potential on-street bicycle parking can be incorporated into section #1 “Functional bike parking”. Having said this, we are supportive of first finding ways to increase bicycle parking within the downtown without having to impact car parking. There is some under-utilized space in the downtown that could be suitable and repurposed as quality bicycle parking locations. If after adding bike parking off-street still results in insufficient space near popular bicyclist destinations, additional on-street parking should be implemented.

Page 65: Move “Bikeways” section as the first section in this chapter.

Creating a seamless and convenient network of bikeways is the most important (and most challenging) task in the downtown and waterfront core. It should be the most visible bicycling strategy in the plan. ‘

Page 65: Have Bikeways section include call for city-wide bike/pedestrian plan

Walking and bicycling are critical components of the city’s transportation system. PlanBTV is so thematically broad and yet so focused on the downtown that it cannot address all the important policy and planning details needed for improving our walking and bicycling network. As a result, we’d like PlanBTV to recommend the City undertake a city-wide bike/pedestrian plan.

Page 65: Explore major E/W bike route between waterfront & downtown on Main St.

As the plan notices, more bicycle facilities in Burlington’s core run N/S. Critical E/W connections are needed. The plan shows a rendering of a cycle track on Main Street. We like this concept. Past plans have suggested College Street or Maple Street for E/W bike routes but they are narrow and hilly. Main Street is the widest street and has a gradual climb. Especially between the waterfront bike path and South Winooski Avenue, Main Street would appear to provide a good route for a cycle track or other enhanced cycling facility.

Page 65: Highlight need for continuous N/S in-town bikeway

The 2004 N/S Bicycle & Pedestrian Study's key recommendation was for a continuous in-town bicycle facility to connect the ONE, the downtown and the South End. Regardless of the type of bicycle facility, this key corridor concept needs to be highlighted in PlanBTV.

Page 68: Better maximize the existing parking resources we currently have.

We agree with and appreciate the statement: "Building more parking is extremely costly and can take many years to see results. Therefore, managing the parking resources that we already have more efficiently must be the 1st priority to mitigate and or reduce demand." As the RSG transportation PlanBTV noted, parking space utilization in the downtown is low – around 65% of capacity. This should mean that enhancing the utilization of existing parking supply through enhanced wayfinding, management and pricing should help us meet much of future demand without costly new capital construction.

Page 68: Openness to wrapped structured parking on edge of downtown

The more opportunities visitors have to park on the edge of downtown, the more we can limit vehicle congestion in the pedestrian-rich downtown zone. If after improvements to the management of existing parking resources are made and City stakeholders still determine a reconfiguration/augmentation of parking supply is needed, the concept in PlanBTV of structured parking in the Super Block or on other edges of the downtown that would replace surface parking lost from new downtown infill development is a reasonable and balanced approach. The opportunity to create quality bicycle and pedestrian facilities downtown is contingent on keeping many vehicles from circulating in our downtown core hunting for parking.

Page 69: Explore BID management of our downtown garages

However, we would like to see a sentence in the parking section about exploring whether having the BID manage the current downtown garages would improve the user experience. No one is more attuned to the need of the downtown customers than our downtown businesses.

Page 69: Include BID language in "Promote Choices for Employees"

Burlington is a relatively small city. Developing successful transportation choice programs takes significant resources and coordination. The ability for downtown to deploy broad transportation demand management strategies may hinge on the expansion of the business improvement district. We recommend identifying the BID as an asset for setting up and maintaining such a TDM effort.

Page 70: Support redefining residential parking permit system

The city's streets are a shared resource for all. If we collectively choose to allocate space in our streets to parking, it should be maximized so that our investment is most effective. The more efficient our parking system is, the greater opportunities exist for improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities. As such, we are supportive of revising our residential parking restrictions to make them more flexible.

Page 76: Broaden N/S bike connection section for motor vehicles

We very much appreciate the recognition in the plan for improved north/south bike/pedestrian connections through downtown, but enhanced N/S connectivity for motor vehicles through downtown would very likely improve N/S bike connectivity by allowing more creative re-use of existing N/S streets. We recommend renaming and revising the section to be simply "Expanding North / South Connections".

Page 77: Enhance secure bike parking locations

There are only two proposed secure bike parking locations identified on the map. The waterfront one is already an existing location with 10 heavily used bike lockers. We agree that there need to be more secure bike parking locations, but there should be more than two locations.

Page 96: Strong support for Pine Street N/S connection

Local Motion strongly supports the currently language in the plan that says: “Additionally at Pine Street, the underground ramp that provides access to the Burlington Town Center (BTC) parking garage could be continued through to Cherry Street, thereby re-establishing north-south traffic flow for vehicles and reducing congestion on Battery and Winooski.” Please keep this language as clear guidance.

Page 104: Clarify pedestrian and bike traffic through the waterfront area

Local Motion believes the plan needs to be clearer that there is intended to be a shoreline pedestrian promenade that wanders along the shore and a multi-use path (the bike path) further inland with a straighter alignment through the waterfront. The shoreline promenade should provide a slow speed, ambling opportunity to sight-see, fish, watch the sunset, etc. The wider, straighter multi-use path would provide cyclists, inline skaters, runners, and walkers a faster route through the waterfront. Trail users would have frequent opportunities to get off the multi-use path and walk to the waterfront pedestrian promenade.

Page 110: Further refinement needed to Maple Street concept

Local Motion is supportive of the general idea of moving the ferry terminal to Maple Street / Perkins Pier. However, we must figure out how to enhance the walk- and bike-friendly atmosphere here. A shoreline pedestrian promenade should be continued in this section and the conflict points between motor vehicles and the multi-use path should be very limited.

Page 114: Correct caption on back of “Around the Plan”

On the back page of “Around the Burlington Plan, the caption says that the picture of building the train station was from around 1800. I believe the first line reached Burlington in 1849, so the construction of the station would have been after that.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. Overall, nice job!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chapin". The signature is stylized with a large, looping 'C' and a trailing flourish.

Chapin Spencer
Executive Director